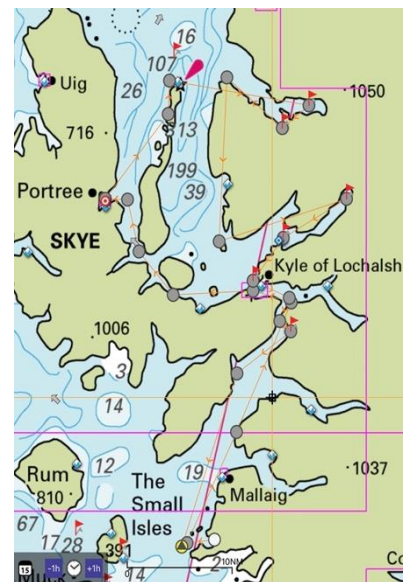


Welcome to Skyeward: around 180nm of breathtaking scenery and sailing in two wonderful Shrimpers: *Dipper of Lorne* (422) and *Sapphire* (21/88). I am Fiona, Skipper of *Dipper*. While Richard was home on the farm harvesting, my trusty crew was Kate, a great friend and sailor. We have enjoyed many adventures, crossing Scotland via the Caledonian Ship Canal, and in 2018 sailing from Dunstaffnage near Oban through the Sound of Mull to The Small Islands.

This adventure was extra special as *Dipper* was accompanied by *Sapphire*, sailed by great friends John and Paula. We set off on 11th August, a change from our planned dates in June which were made impossible by extraordinarily high winds. We left home in Bedfordshire at 19:00 and 550 miles later, due to a horrendous detour, arrived at our destination 08:30ish and had *Dipper* in her berth by 10:30.

The plan had been to launch in Arisaig, sail north up the Sound of Sleat around Rona and return. But with high winds forecast, *Dipper* was launched in Mallaig and Kate and I enjoyed two nights in their very comfortable marina, with super hot showers, the most delicious bakery next-door offering seriously indulgent fresh pastries and breads and a wonderful wood-fired pizzeria at weekends. Best of all was The Cabin, a seafood restaurant - surely one of the highlights of any sailing holiday. The local wet-fish shop sold, in John's words "the best smoked salmon I have ever tasted."



Launching at Mallaig was interesting! We rigged *Dipper* in the high street bus stop (the bus driver was very understanding).

We undertook a fascinating manoeuvre to launch via the town slip, at the side of the bus stop. (Serious point - you need a 4x4 to launch a Shrimper at Mallaig.) Meanwhile, John and Paula camped in *Sapphire* in the Arisaig marina car park. They launched successfully the next day, well supported by the helpful and friendly marina team.

Whilst waiting for the right weather window, we explored the lovely coastline between Arisaig and Mallaig, with the stunning Camusdarroch beach made famous in the 1980's film *Local Hero*, and the Jacobite steam train, featured in Harry Potter, which runs from Ben Nevis some 84m along this stretch of coast for enthusiasts to enjoy. We strode out on a fabulous walk along the shores of Loch Morar and swam at Camusdarroch.

The Sailing!

Day 1 – 30nm By Saturday conditions finally improved and we sailed with a 12-15 knot westerly wind on an exhilarating reach north, rendezvousing at picturesque Isleornsay, half way up the east coast of the Isle of Skye. This idyllic anchorage with some visitor buoys has a great local hotel, craft shop and gallery – definitely worth calling into.

The challenge for the afternoon was to take on the formidable Kyle Rhea, a narrow channel separating the Isle of Skye and the mainland. Seals welcome you from east and west, swimming happily in the eddies and currents. We were fortunate: we had an easy passage with a 3-4 knot tide running with us and were soon turning west towards Skye Bridge. A pod of playful dolphins and a glorious sunset rounded off our first day.

Day 2 – 34nm: *Dipper* and *Sapphire* shot Skye Bridge at 08:15 heading east with the flood tide into Loch Carroch; this charming loch feels quite alpine with woodland tumbling down to the waterside. Plockton, (well served with visitor buoys) is famed for its charm. Whilst *Sapphire* picked up a buoy here for the night *Dipper* continued to the Crowlin



Islands, a cluster of three small islands aptly named En Mor, En Meadhonach, En Beag, translated as Large, Medium and Small Island respectively! They provided a magical anchorage in a tiny lagoon.

I think Kate and I felt we had truly found a little bit of heaven, the only disturbance was the occasional bobbing head of a curious seal. Some-time around 10pm another yacht motored in to find their slice of heaven too.

Day 3 – 25nm: Reunited with *Sapphire* we headed north up the Inner Sound through gentle windless mists and flat tranquil seas, enjoying several pods of dolphins and countless seals. Following the shore line we took in the sights of Poll Domhain, Culduie, Camusterrach (all offered lovely anchorages) and Applecross. Kate, reflecting on our delicious lunch of smoked Mallaig salmon, made the inspired decision to send home to her partner Tony a gift of smoked salmon.

This seemed a great idea so Kate was soon on the phone to the smokery at Mallaig ordering both salmon and kippers with appropriate gift messages for our families. www.andyrace.co.uk (It is not too late to order for Christmas.)

The winds picked up through the day resulting in a great sail into Loch Torridon at 15:00 and through to our anchorage at the village of Shieldaig, where we picked up visitor buoys. The local cafe, though closing, kindly sold us some milk for breakfast next day. We enjoyed a well-deserved beer at the Shieldaig Bar and Coastal Kitchen on the way back to the boats.

Day 4 - 28nm: We started with shore leave in Shieldaig, where we met 'Glasgow John' who lived in a caravan at the side of the loch and proudly maintained the village and facilities. His talents extended to growing vegetables and later that day, Paula served up supper, cooked with chillies gifted from his 'garden' in the Loch-side car park!

This delightful character was full of chat, of life, spectacular sunsets, local wildlife, in particular a family of nesting white-tailed eagles which had successfully reared a chick this year. Very excitingly, as we departed for Upper Loch Torridon with our eyes scanning the skies, we were graced with a magnificent view of the eagle which soared overhead giving us a clear view of its distinctive feathering.

Upper Loch Torridon affords a true Highland landscape dramatically

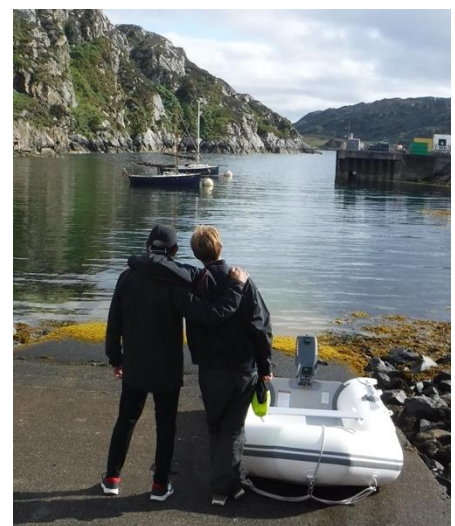


surrounded by four high Munroes. *Sapphire* had a glorious sail to the head of the loch but sadly *Dipper* had a failure in the rigging, as a pair of cheek blocks for the gaff halyard ripped off, forcing us to motor and leave a full exploration of Loch Torridon to another visit. Kate helmed *Dipper* whilst I raided my ditty box and devised some rigging modifications, using amongst other things a soft shackle which enabled us to safely hoist the sail and head west to the Isle of Rona, otherwise known as South Rona. Overhead, terns dipped and wheeled as we enjoyed a good sail to the Sound of Raasay. *Dipper* followed the channel entrance a mile north of the mainland; far more bravely, *Sapphire* navigated the channels closer to shore. We landed at Loch a Bhraige, a small naval base and walked up to the lighthouse to take in 360-degree views.



Loch A Bhraige

The afternoon sail south to Acarseid Mhor was fabulous, with a lovely westerly making easy sailing along this pretty coast. Our anchorage at Acarseid Mhor was another highlight. The first challenge was to find our way into this stunningly welcoming lagoon. Extraordinarily you will find the



Loch A Bhraige
Captain & crew of *Sapphire*

almanac says “look for the arrow painted on the rock” - so true. There are several visitor buoys which say “welcome”, these are provided and maintained by the only two people to live full time on the island, husband and wife Bill and Lorraine Cowie.



Kate and Bill chewing the cud at Aarseid Mhor

They offer showers in the bunk house, but these were sadly out of order. Bill is delightful and resourceful, offering island venison or locally caught and smoked haddock for sale, as well as local stamps and a postal service to the mainland. Kate turned the haddock into the most delicious kedgereee ever, truly scrumptious.



Aarseid Mhor

Day 5 – 12nm: Commenced with a walk ashore to visit the famed church cave. My navigation skills failed completely as I headed off through thigh-high bracken and bogs in search of the cave, much to the justified annoyance of my fellows. Bill was a little surprised we had not followed the well-marked

footpath 300m north of my chosen path! So this too remains a destination for another trip.

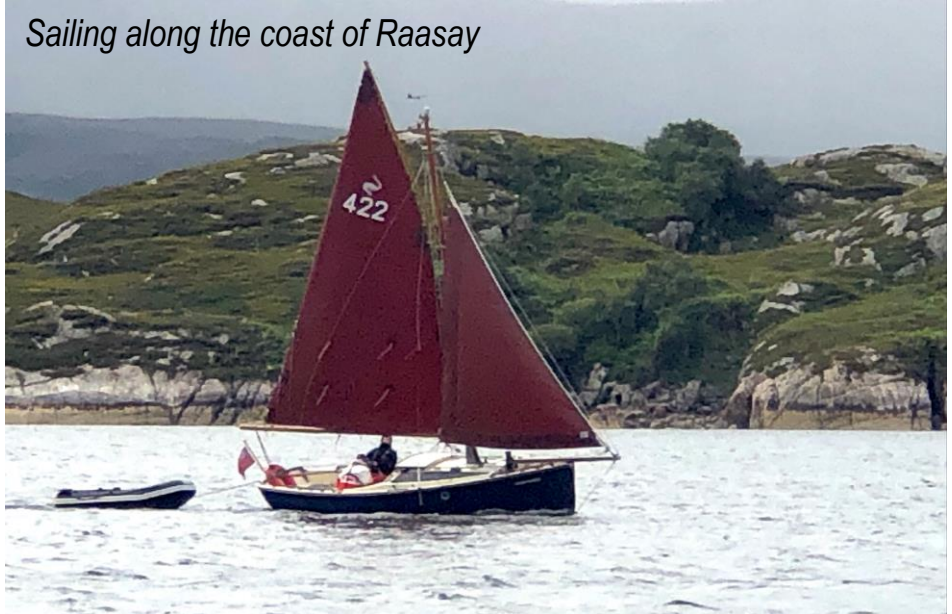
We set sail to Skye, taking in Fladday harbour at the north end of Raasay, yet another pretty anchorage and then west to Portree, the capital of Skye. Kate needed a health check at Portree Hospital, not as straightforward to arrange as you might hope. Apparently 111 can only provide advice when you are on terra firma! Once ashore Kate spoke to several people at 111 and was eventually fortunate enough to speak to a doctor, a fellow sailor, who seemed to be far more sympathetic and arranged a much-needed hospital check-up. Following a very, very long wait, she got the all clear and was soon recovering. To celebrate she invested in the most expensive shower ever at the local hotel, as the hostel's showers were unavailable due to Covid restrictions.

Portree is a busy town, bustling with tourists which I think was rather a shock following the relaxed solitude we had grown accustomed to over the previous few days. Sadly, the chandlers was closed; however one of several hardware shops was able to supply the spares we needed.

Day 6 – 32nm: Heading south enjoying the coast of Raasay to the east and Skye to the west. *Sapphire* sailed through Loch na Cairidh and the Scalpay narrows. *Dipper* picked up a buoy to take in Arduish Clachan and the newly established Isle of Raasay Distillery and hotel. We were given some wonderful advice on our selections, whilst a group were enjoying a whisky class that seemed to incorporate extensive sampling! Kate took home a fabulous Raasay Gin whilst I selected the Isle of Raasay Single malt. Returning to *Dipper* we set sail, taking the east passage around Scalpay, reuniting with *Sapphire* at the head of Kyle Rhea in time to catch the

afternoon tide south.

As the evening drew in the winds dropped and we ended the day motor-sailing into our final anchorage for the week, once more at charming Isleornsay.



Day 7 – 19nm: On our return trip to Arisaig, the winds came and went several times throughout the day; sometimes we made 5 knots and other times only 1.2 knots. Ferries crossed our path between Mallaig and Skye, and we passed alluring beaches to the east. Our final sail ended as we turned into the stunning inlet of Arisaig. We navigated *Dipper* through the north channel while *Sapphire* took the south-west channel; both require care with unmarked submerged rocks! At 18:00 our trusty Shrimpers were helped out on to their trailers by the marina team. Our final meal ashore was at a local café in Arisaig which was hosting its first ever monthly themed restaurant night serving a range of delicious curries and Asian delights. Following a good sleep ashore we arose and headed south around 6:30 am. The drive is stunning, following the coast and lochs, through Glen Coe and dropping down to follow the shore of Loch Lomond, picking up the motorway just outside Glasgow and so to the South.

“Speed bonny boat, like a bird on the wing, over the sea to Skye.” This adventure lived up to our expectations, we are

never disappointed by the people, the seas, islands, food and landscapes of the west coast of Scotland. God willing we will be speeding bonny *Dipper* to the west coast for another adventure in 2022.

Fiona Frossell – *Dipper of Lorne* (422)

PS

When Kate and I were on our last adventure we had the very great fortune to meet Nick and Anne Webster who have the most beautiful yacht, Escapade a lovely Hallberg Rassy.

Nick and Anne have been sailing the west coast islands for over a decade and have shown us the most enormous kindness and friendship, in particular sharing their experiences and recommended anchorages. I have shared this with you below so you too might benefit from their experience when you plan your adventures.

As you can see from our log there are many still to visit – we eagerly look forward!

DIPPER 2021: MAIN ANCHORAGES DISCUSSED ON SATURDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2020 (South to north)

[Arisaig, \(Loch nan Ceall\)](#) ((56° 53.64N: 005° 55.77W – entrance). *Interesting exit/approach - check pilot. Attractive & sheltered at head of loch. Moorings owned by Arisaig Marine (01687 450224). Slipway, water on pontoon. Hotel, shop & restaurant. Rail connections to Mallaig & Fort William/Glasgow. Good place to leave a boat.*

[Loch Moidart, \(south of Arisaig\)](#) (56° 47.20N: 005° 53.24W - entrance). *Check pilot for entrance details. Anchor west of Riska island near small pier. Note ruined Castle Tioem - worth a visit in the dinghy. Remote, attractive, sheltered and good holding.*

[Loch Scavaig, Skye](#) (57° 11.26N: 006° 09.62W entrance). *Check pilot for entrance details. Fair weather anchorage. Subject to down draughts. Possible to anchor in inner loch and go ashore to visit dramatic Loch Coruisk - surrounded by the Black Cuillin mountains. Many seals. If conditions unsettled, nearest anchorages are Soay Harbour (entrance tide dependant) or Loch Scresort, Rum.*

[Isleornsay, Skye](#) (57° 09.22N: 005°46.77W - entrance). *Good shelter & holding.*

Also 4 visitors buoys north of Ornsay Hotel. Also 4 visitors buoys off Druidsdale Hotel (west of anchorage) and 3 visitors buoys in Loch na Dal south of Kinloch Lodge Hotel.

Plockton, Loch Carron (57° 20.52N: 005° 38.47W - entrance). *Attractive sheltered harbour with c.25 visitors buoys. Dinghy to pontoon. Good place to leave a boat (by arrangement), rail service to Inverness and Kyle of Lochalsh. Seafood at Plockton Hotel on water front.*

Portree, Skye (57° 24.73N: 006° 11.70W). Capital of Skye Good shelter except in strong S or SW. 8 visitors buoys. Short stay pontoon. Water hose & fuel (by can). Good for provisions.

Acarseid Mhor, South Rona (57° 31.85N: 005° 59.95W - entrance). *Check pilot for entrance details. Sheltered, good holding & 5 visitors buoys. (Island manager: Bill Cowie & wife Lorraine - sole inhabitants - old friends 07831 293963). Impressive old cave chapel on east of island - 30 mins walk from Lodge. Interesting remains of old settlement above & east of Dry Harbour 45 mins. Attractive walk to ruined chapel on southern end of island - 3 hours round trip.*

Loch Torridon, (57° 36N: 005° 49W - entrance). *Spectacular loch surrounded by 4 Munroes with many anchorages (good holding & searoom near Torridon Hotel at the head of the loch). Gille Brighde Restaurant at Diabaig (fair weather anchorage). Community moorings at Shieldaig.*

Loch Gairloch, (57° 43N: 005° 45W). Check pilot. Various anchorages: Flowerdale Bay (small pontoon by pier), Badachro (Inn), Loch Shieldaig buoys if available,

Loch Ewe (57° 52.52N: 005° 40.00W - entrance). RN & NATO fuelling jetty. Good shelter in several anchorages. Outstanding NTS Inverewe Gardens towards head of loch, can anchor off small pier if calm.

Skyeward – Fiona Frossell

Summer Isles (58° 01N: 05° 25W) Check pilot for fair weather anchorages. Nearest sheltered anchorage east of Isle Martin - tripping line recommended. Summer Isles Hotel at Achiltibuie.

Ullapool (57° 53.70N: 05° 09.38W) Loch Broom sheltered in harbour, 8 visitors buoys. Short stay on pier (water), fuel by can. Provisions & restaurants.

nw.03.03.20